

SPORTS FINAL

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(USPS226-160) FIFTY-CENTS

NEWS

Two arrested in federal drug bust in Madison.

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PEOPLE

The year in news: Press-Record/Journal reporters select top stories.

Page 4B

Raceway bond issue gets support

By Scott Cousins
Staff writer

The Southwestern Illinois Development Authority has given its preliminary endorsement to the issuance of \$21.5 million in industrial revenue bonds for the expansion and improvement of Gateway International Raceway in Madison.

"We feel strongly that this development will be an economic catalyst which will provide employment

opportunities as well as encourage additional private investment in the area," said Alan Orbals, executive director of SWIDA.

At its Dec. 21 meeting, SWIDA members were given a presentation by Christopher Pook, president of ASTS, a subsidiary of Grand Prix Association of Long Beach Inc. In November 1994 that firm purchased the raceway and announced plans for a major expansion.

After listening to Pook's presenta-

tion, the SWIDA board voted unanimously to support the plans and adopted a preliminary inducement resolution to issue the industrial development revenue bonds. The board also voted unanimously to seek approval from Gov. Jim Edgar for a moral obligation from the state for the bond offering.

Orbals and SWIDA are assisting the city of Madison in developing a tax increment financing district for the area.

In a TIF district, the amount of tax revenue received by taxing bodies is frozen. As improvements are made, the value of the property and the tax revenue it generates increases.

Over the district's 22-year life, approximately \$20 million in tax revenue would be spent to develop the area.

The first phase of the plan would be the construction of a new 4,000-foot drag strip. The second phase would be a 1.25-mile oval track. Included in

those plans would be 35,000 permanent seats.

When completed, the raceway would be a state-of-the-art facility and could attract National Hot Rod Association and National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing events.

The first phase is expected to begin in March, and should be ready by October. The second phase is slated to begin as soon as phase one is finished.

(See BONDS, Page 7A)

Drainage bids high

North Granite project faces further delay

By Bob Slate
Staff writer

A \$275,000 drainage improvement project in North Granite — scheduled for completion six months ago but not yet begun — may be in jeopardy because all five of the bids received on the project came in at least \$100,000 higher than that amount.

One of those bids was more than \$350,000 higher than the engineer's estimated cost of the project.

The North Granite area has long been plagued by standing water during and after periods of heavy rain. The city began planning a comprehensive stormwater drainage improvement project for the area in 1993. The first phase of the project, to be paid for with Community Development Block Grant funds, was scheduled for completion in the summer of 1995.

But delays in receiving plans from Sherrill Associates, the project engineer, put the project on hold for nearly a year.

The plans were received and the project was bid late last year.

The plans call for a storm sewer with a 60-inch diameter main trunk running along North Nameoki Drive and laterals of 15-inches and larger. The first phase is for an area bounded by 27th Place.

Circle Drive and Nameoki Drive and would enhance drainage in the area southwest of 27th Place.

But each of the five construction companies that bid on phase one of the project submitted proposals much higher than the \$275,000 allocated — causing city leaders to re-evaluate the project.

C.D. Peters Construction Co. of Granite City was the low bidder with a base bid of \$379,441 — more than \$100,000 higher than the engineer's estimate of \$274,655.

Other bidders were Keller Construction of Glen Carbon at \$630,405; Barton Contractors of

Three options exist if the project is to move forward — reject all the bids and request new bids, scale the project back and solicit new bids or allocate more money for the project.

— Joe Juneau
Engineer



Magician John Apperson of Granite City attracts a crowd of Prather Elementary students wanting to pet the rabbit he pulled out of a hat.

Magic man

Police officer loves to perform

By Bob Slate
Staff writer

John Apperson's house near Wilson Park is filled with rabbits.

White bunnies — usually made of porcelain and popping their heads out of a hat — abound in the Apperson household. The collection stems from Apperson's love of and fascination with magic.

The Apperson basement is filled with books on the subject and tricks accumulated in Apperson's more than 20 years as a professional magician.

Apperson, a full-time officer with the Granite City police department, receives considerable pleasure from delighting audiences young and old, large and small. But the best part of being a magician, he said, is the camaraderie that exists between conjurers.

"I've made friends from around the world through my association with magic."

(See MAGIC, Page 8A)

Law toughens rail crossing penalties

SPRINGFIELD — In a drive to increase road safety, motorists are affected by several new laws that began Jan. 1.

Drivers who go around railroad crossing gates, fail to stop for school buses, park illegally in handicapped spaces or drink and drive face stiffer penalties.

A mandatory fine of \$500 or 50 hours of community service will be imposed against any motorist or pedestrian ticketed for violating a railroad crossing warning device, under one of several new laws.

Previously, fines for the offense started as low as \$75 — even though the majority of the 46 fatalities recorded at Illinois railway crossings in 1994 took place at intersections marked with gates, flashing lights or other active warning signals.

"I hope these new penalties will make more Illinoisans think twice before getting

(See LAWS, Page 7A)

For fighting police

Teen-ager gets six years

By Bob Slate
Staff writer

A Granite City teen-ager convicted earlier this year of battering three police officers and tearing up a squad car in June of 1994 was sentenced Wednesday to six years in prison.

Larry E. Severs Jr., now 19, was sentenced by Associate Judge J. Lawrence Keshner Wednesday to three concurrent four-year prison terms in connection with aggravated battery charges and a consecutive two-year sentence for the criminal damage to property conviction.

Severs and several family members and friends cried during most of the testimony at the emotion-charged sentencing hearing.

Severs' mother, overcome with emotion during the hearing, had to be removed from the courtroom before sentence was passed.

A Madison County jury convicted Severs on three aggravated battery counts July 25 after

10 hours of deliberations.

Assistant State's Attorney Rich Rybak, who prosecuted the case, said that Severs seriously injured at least three Granite City police officers responding to a domestic battery call at Severs' home June 18, 1994, and that Severs caused more than \$1,200 damage to a police squad car.

The jury acquitted Severs of a charge of aggravated assault, finding insufficient evidence to prove a prosecution claim that Severs pointed a gun at a police officer.

While Rybak asked for a sentence of 13 years in prison, defense attorney Samantha Kerth argued a sentence of probation for Severs, who had no prior or subsequent criminal record.

"I really didn't mean for this to happen," Severs told Keshner before sentence was passed. "I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.... I'm just so sorry."

Keshner called the case "a classic case of

(See TEEN, Page 7A)

In the Press-Record

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5-DAY FORECAST

John Fuller, Chief Meteorologist, KSKD-TV Channel 5

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
28°	24°	20°	23°
19°	10°	9°	18°

Faces

Sister Margaret Mary Wilgate of Madison recently celebrated her 60th year as a member of the Congregation of Divine Providence. She joined the community Aug. 5, 1935.

A graduate of St. Mark School in Venice, Sr. Margaret Mary received her bachelor's and master's degrees from St. Louis University before becoming a teacher and administrator. The retired educator currently serves in prayer ministry. She has served as teacher and administrator at St. Elizabeth School in Granite City and as teacher at St. Mary-St. Mark School in Madison and Venice.

She has also served in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.



Sister Margaret Mary Wilgate

Family Dollar store shuts doors

By Scott Cousins
Staff writer

Slow sales have resulted in the closing of the Family Dollar store in Madison's Alpine Village Shopping Center, 304 Madison Ave.

A corporate official at the store Wednesday said it was closed New Year's Eve.

"The store is closed and we are moving out," he said. "We've done a number of store closings, and this was one of them."

The shopping center is owned by the city of Madison. Farm Fresh is the center's

other tenant.

City officials said they were not notified of the store closing, and at Tuesday's council meeting complained about the company's decision.

"I don't know why city hall wasn't notified," Alderman Ronald Grzywacz said at Tuesday's meeting. "If they are getting out they should have at least given us the courtesy of letting us know."

The Madison store was one of 13 closed nationwide in December. Corporate spokesman Florence Stanley said the company was not down-sizing.

(See STORE, Page 7A)

Stickers to be required for utility activation

By Bob Slate
Staff writer

All Granite City residents will have to have a sticker placed on their electrical meters before Illinois Power will turn on their power, under a plan tentatively approved by the City Council Tuesday.

Under the plan, all rental property would require an inspection by the city's staff each time there is a change in tenants. Stickers would be placed on meters of rental units only after the building passes inspection. Inspections and stickers would also be required for commercial property. Inspections would be waived on homes occupied by the owners, but those

units would still need a sticker before power could be turned on.

Stickers for rental units will cost \$25 — the current fee for an inspection. Stickers for owner-occupied homes where the inspection is waived will be provided at no charge.

The council voted 11-1 Tuesday to have the city attorney staff review the city's current occupancy code and recommend changes necessary to implement the sticker program.

The change is necessary because Illinois Power has changed the way it does business, Zoning Administrator Glen Hollis said.

Before turning on power to a housing unit, IP used to check with the engineering office each time there was a name change on utility bills,

Hollis said. But, as of Jan. 1, all that is required to activate utilities is a customer telephone call to IP's Decatur office.

IP came up with the optional sticker plan for municipalities that require inspections. But, the company said, cities must either require stickers for all activations or not require them at all.

While the City Council wanted to continue occupancy inspections on rental property, aldermen voted last month against requiring inspections on owner-occupied, single-family dwellings.

"We don't want (electricity and gas service on) all renters just turned on by a telephone call," said Alderman Craig Tarpoff, chairman

of the City Council's Planning, Zoning and Engineering Committee.

Tarpoff said the inspections help to eliminate unsafe conditions and ensure that rental units meet city electrical codes.

Hollis said the new program will require additional manpower in his office to handle additional paperwork that will be faxed to Illinois Power. He suggested an existing part-time clerk be upgraded to full-time.

Alderman Bob Page cast the lone vote against the sticker program. He said the program penalizes those who abide by the rules while allowing others to circumvent the law.

Page said landlords can have utilities placed (See STICKER, Page 7A)

Madison finalizes street purchases

By Scott Cousins
Staff writer

Ordinances dealing with the financing of two pieces of heavy equipment for the Madison Street Department were approved at the city council meeting Tuesday.

The city will use a four-year lease-purchase agreement to obtain a front-end loader and new garbage truck for use by the Street Department.

The total cost including financing will be \$187,056.96. Part of the cost of the front-end loader will be paid by Motor Fuel Tax funds.

The remainder of the cost and the total cost of the garbage truck will be paid from money set aside from trash collection fees.

In late November the council approved purchasing the front-end loader from Erb Equipment Co. for \$78,111, and a new garbage truck from Key Equipment in St. Louis for \$87,780.

The purchase of the garbage truck includes a trade-in. In other business, the council voted on several matters relating to the new city hall.

In a series of votes, the council approved adding the building to the city's insurance, seeking an engineering study of improvements necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, to seek bids for either a new roof or repairs on the existing one and to negotiate with a local bank for financing of improvements.

All the votes passed 7-1, with Alderman Norris Horton voting no on all.

Horton has been an outspoken critic of the plans for a new city hall.

City officials finalized the purchase of the building Friday at a cost of \$117,000. The council had originally agreed to purchase the building for \$130,000, but later negotiated a reduction if the building was paid for in cash by the end of 1995.

The council originally approved purchase of the building in October for \$120,000, but voted to renegotiate the deal in late November after an inspection revealed some problems with the roof.

The council approved going ahead with the purchase at a special meeting Dec. 13.

City officials plan to move both the city hall and police station.

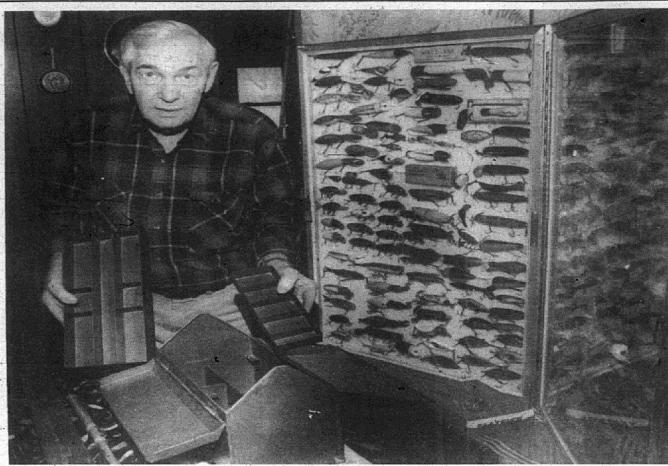
The total cost of the move is expected to be between \$300,000-400,000.

City officials have been considering the move since late summer when problems developed in trying to make the present city hall at 1529 Third St. comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Part of the cost of renovations — work required to comply with the ADA — will be paid with a \$107,000 grant from Madison County Community Development.

The grant was originally to be used to install an elevator at the present city hall. The elevator would have made the second floor council chambers and offices accessible.

However, there were problems with tying the elevator into the existing building, and the cost was more than expected.



(Staff photo by T.L. WITT)

Wes Gray, of Belleville, an avid collector of fishing tackle, shows off a Kennedy tackle box from the mid-'40s that he found at a garage sale. Gray is a member of the National Fishing Lure Collector's Club.

Fishing show this weekend

A display of antique fishing tackle by members of the National Fishing Lure Collectors Club will be only one attraction at the Let's Go Fishing Show scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the Gateway Center in Collinsville.

Show exhibitors will be presenting for sale a wide selection of fishing tackle, accessories and fishing boats. Organizer Steve Lengyel said they will be the biggest show yet.

A major attraction will be seminars offered by professional anglers, along with many regional experts and guides. KMOX Radio's team of Tony Albright and Bill Seibel will be "Talking Fish" with the crowd at 3:30 p.m. Saturday.

Tim Renken of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, who has been writing and teaching about fishing for more than 30 years, will present a seminar on bluegill fishing at 6:30 p.m. Friday.

Among pros featured are some of the top names in tournament fishing, including Paul

Elias on Friday, Charlie Campbell and Stacey King on Saturday and Guido Hibdon and Harold Allen on Sunday.

Members of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will be providing a "pitch and win" contest for young anglers, and teaching proper fish handling techniques for kids.

Coupons good for \$1 off the regular admission are available at participating NAPA Auto Parts stores and at participating boat dealers, including Hylak's Marine and The Boat Place in Belleville, Nameeki Village Marine in Granite City, Clark Boat & Motor in East Alton, Olson Marine in Highland and The Fishin' Hole and Bud's Place in St. Louis.

Admission at the door is \$4 for adults and \$2 for children ages 6-12, with children 5 and under free. Show hours are 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

Firm to help with 20-year transit plan

By Scott Cousins
Staff writer

A public relations office used by the Madison County Transit District's Riders Fund program will be used for the county's 20-year transit plan.

At a meeting last week, the district board of trustees approved a resolution to enter an agreement with Grandone Hauser Inc. to help with the public participation process of the plan.

Transit District Director Jerry Kane said he is unsure exactly how much the contract will be, because they have not determined the amount of time required for work on public input.

District officials will be meeting early next month with Bucher, Willis & Ratliff, a Kansas City consulting company hired at the last board meeting to prepare the plan.

The plan is a comprehensive study of the county's transportation needs for the next 20-25 years. It will cover everything from highways and airports to light rail and bike trails.

At its last meeting the board approved a resolution authorizing an agreement with Madison County to develop the plan. The Madison County Board approved participation in the plan at its December meeting.

The cost to each will be about \$250,000. The plan will be out about 16 months to prepare.

Four separate advisory committees will be used in developing the plan.

The first, a citizens' advisory committee, will be divided geographically. Representatives will come from the Alton-Wood River, East County, I-55 Corridor and Tri-Cities areas.

The second will be a technical advisory committee and will include experts in airports, bikeways, streets and highways, transit, and waterways.

The third will include community leaders from business, institutions and labor unions.

The final committee will be elected officials.

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